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35836

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

Mrg. 11-70

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2521
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
USCINCSO

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ CARACAS 3037

SUBJECT: HELICOPTER INCIDENT

REF: BOGOTA 3372

1. WE ARE SURPRISED THAT COLONEL RUTTER, HEAD OF IAGS/ COLOMBIA AND THEREFORE PRESUMABLY AN EXPERT ON GEOGRAPHY, SHOULD MAKE STATEMENT THAT WORK CARRIED OUT BY HELICOPTERS INVOLVED IN INCIDENT OF MAY 27 WAS BEING CONDUCTED "INSIDE COLOMBIA IN AN EXTREMELY REMOTE AREA FAR FROM ANY AREA OF IMPORTANCE."

2. THIS STATEMENT BY A PRESUMABLY SEASONED CARTOGRAPHER STANDS IN ODD JUXTAPOSITION TO OUR LATEST AIR CHARTS WHICH INDICATE THAT TUNEBIA IS EXACTLY 34 NAUTICAL MILES AMOST DUE SOUTH OF SAN CRISTOBAL, CAPITAL OF TACHIRA STATE, WITH A POPULATION OF A QUARTER OF A MILLION PEOPLE, WHICH AT LEAST IN VENEZUELAN EYES IS REGARDED AS AN "AREA OF IMPORTANCE." WE ALSO NOTE (DAO BOGOTA 291535Z MAY 71) THAT "DEPARTURE ROUTE FROM TUNEBIA AIR FIELD PLANNED FOR NORTHERLY COURSE FROM TUNEBIA AIR FIELD TO SANTO DOMINGO BEACON"-- WHICH IS INSIDE VENEZUELAN TERRITORY SOME 15 NAUTICAL MILES SOUTH OF SAN CRISTOBAL.

3. REQUEST THAT INSTRUCTIONS BE GIVEN TO IAGS/COLOMBIA THAT THERE BE NO REPEAT NO MAPPING FLIGHTS NEAR VENEZUELAN BORDER WITHOUT EXPLICIT AUTHORIZATION FROM WASHINGTON, INFO TO CARACAS. GP-3.

MCCLINTOCK

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